

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 312 325

UD 026 980

TITLE The Public Academy Approach: A Model for the Future.

INSTITUTION Minneapolis Public Schools, MN. Program Evaluation Services.

SPONS AGENCY General Mills, Inc., Minneapolis, Minn.

PUB DATE 89

NOTE 11p.; For related document, see UD 026 981.

PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Cost Estimates; Elementary Education; Evaluation Criteria; Experimental Schools; *Nontraditional Education; *Parent School Relationship; *Participative Decision Making; Pilot Projects; Principals; Private Education; Program Proposals; Public Schools; *Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Role; *Urban Schools

IDENTIFIERS *Empowerment; *Minnesota (Minneapolis)

ABSTRACT

This proposal is for a pilot project that applies the best features of private schools to the racially diverse, urban, public elementary schools of Minneapolis (Minnesota). The following features are outlined: (1) classrooms will have a 14:1 student-teacher ratio; (2) all supplemental and compensatory programs will be eliminated; (3) 198 students will be selected to reflect the district population in terms of race, socioeconomic status, academic level, and special needs; (4) teachers will be selected to reflect the profile of the district teaching staff; (5) teachers will be accountable for all outcomes; (6) the principal will use a joint decision-making model in which teachers make decisions and exercise authority, and the principal creates the conditions under which the teachers develop and exercise leadership; (7) information on student and staff success will be clearly communicated to all parties in a timely manner and teachers will be expected to communicate with parents after school hours; (8) improved student performance will be the criterion for program evaluation. The following evaluation criteria will be used: (1) 75 percent of the students will demonstrate at least 14 months of growth in both reading and mathematics as measured by the California Achievement Test; (2) telephone logs kept by teachers and the school office will indicate that 90 percent of calls from parents were directed to the home of the student's teacher rather than to the principal or office staff; (3) 90 percent of the students will pass the district's Benchmark Tests on the first attempt; (4) the parents of every student will confer at least twice with the student's teacher and 95 percent of the parents will be satisfied with the frequency and clarity of progress reports; and (5) the overall student attendance rate will be 95 percent. Three-year cost estimates are included. (FMW)

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THE PUBLIC ACADEMY APPROACH: A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

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The diversity of the student population in the largest school district in Minnesota provides a base for a broad range of special programs to meet individual needs and values. On the one hand, the size of the school system allows a range of educational alternatives and program options without equal in the state. On the other hand, the range of diversity among students enrolled in the school district has required extensive support programs to address special individual student needs beyond the developmental needs of an age group.

Diversity should be the Minneapolis Public School district's greatest strength. But, as schools have traditionally been structured, diversity is only a strength so long as the resources are available to provide special programs to supplement the regular curriculum for students whose developmental needs are different from those of the bulk of the students in their age group. As resources become more scarce, and as the student population becomes more diverse, significant numbers of citizens have come to believe that the Minneapolis Public Schools are not providing quality programs for students of average or above average ability who come from homes with traditional values supporting education.

This proposal defines a new theory of the student-teacher relationship, and suggests that the theory be tested in a Kindergarten through grade 6 pilot program involving 198 Minneapolis Public School children. The proposed pilot is different from other attempts to meet the challenges of diversity. Instead of introducing additional services, it calls for major restructuring of the traditional school, streamlining services, and empowering teachers in order to better meet the needs of all Minneapolis children. This proposal includes the best features of prestigious private schools, but does so within a desegregated, urban, public school system. Thus, this proposed service delivery design will be called the Public Academy Approach.

The History of Alternative Programs in the MPS

In 1971, the Minneapolis district applied for a federal grant to participate in an "experimental schools" project. One of three school systems chosen from over 500 applicants, the system used the \$7 million grant to start the Southeast Alternatives Project in Southeast Minneapolis. Four distinct alternative programs were designed: Contemporary, Continuous Progress, Open, and Free programs. Parents were given the opportunity to select the program type they perceived to be most appropriate to the needs of their children and the values of their families. The Southeast Alternatives Project served as a model for the expansion of alternative programs throughout the district, and for the development of additional alternatives including Fundamentals, Montessori, and a number of specialty learning centers.

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Yet, in spite of the growth of the alternative programs and their popularity, especially among majority, financially-stable, well-educated families, only relatively small numbers of parents select options other than the traditional contained classroom (Contemporary Program) for their children. Of the 23,282 children in grades K-9 who took Benchmark tests in the Spring of 1985, only 18.3% were enrolled in Continuous Progress programs, 9.9% in Fundamentals programs, 9.8% in Open programs, and 1.9% in Montessori programs.

When Minneapolis received the federal grant in 1971, the district was different in many respects from the way it is today. In 1971, total K-12 enrollment was 65,201 of which only 9,466, or 14.5%, were minority. Last Fall, total K-12 enrollment in the Minneapolis Public Schools was 39,512, but of that number, 16,772, or 42.5% were minority. Unlike the Minneapolis Public Schools of 1971, the district today is successfully desegregated. Although legal action in the Federal District Courts provided the impetus for change, the Minneapolis Public Schools of today are committed to desegregation not only because of State regulations, but because equity as well as excellence is central to the district's very mission.

The Challenge

Urban education in the Minneapolis community is constantly being challenged to provide the best in educational opportunities. There is abundant evidence that the school district, especially during the past five years, has done much to meet the challenge. Despite these accomplishments, there remains a significant challenge if the student-teacher relationship is to be maximized in the diverse, urban community Minneapolis has become.

- * Because of a history of social inequities and oppression, the growing minority enrollment is over-represented in poverty, drop-out, and low-achievement populations and in programs intended to intervene in those conditions.
- * While only 12% of White students in the Minneapolis Public Schools scored in the below average group (lowest 23%) on standardized reading and language arts tests in 1985, 29% of the American Indian students and 34% of the Black students scored in the below average group.
- * In 1985-86, 29.0% of students' families received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The economic stresses of some Minneapolis Public Schools' families are also reflected in 1986 school lunch statistics: last year, approximately 38.7% of the students in the Minneapolis Public Schools were eligible for free or reduced lunches.
- * Asians are the fastest growing portion of the student body, both numerically and proportionately. As of last Fall, Minneapolis Public Schools were serving 1965 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students whose families had recently undergone massive change and whose parents are often unable to speak or understand any English.

- * Student mobility directly impacts student achievement. In 1986-87, the average rate of turnover in Minneapolis Public Schools was 41.9%. Between September 15 and the end of the school year, the Central Placement and Assessment Center (CPAC) placed 3,869 late-arriving students in the elementary grades alone.
- * A significant number of students have complex, severe, and multiple problems sufficient to jeopardize their potential school success. In 1986-87, the Minneapolis Public Schools provided special education services to a total of 5,106 handicapped students in the district.
- * Although the minority student population is 42.5% and continues to grow, the minority staff percentage remains low. Only 11.5% of all teachers are minority. Because minority staff have tended to be recent hires and layoffs are governed strictly by seniority rules, there has been only limited success in increasing the percentage.
- * The teaching staff of the Minneapolis Public Schools is a relatively senior one. Fully 64% are at the top step of the salary schedule, given their educational preparation.
- * Of the 2,759 teachers employed by the Minneapolis Public Schools last year, a significant proportion made their decision to work in the district more than 15 years ago when the schools and the city were significantly different from the way they are today.

Possible Solutions

The challenges facing the Minneapolis Public Schools are compounded by the challenges facing the City of Minneapolis. The population of Minneapolis is aging. It is estimated that only 18% of all households in the city have children in school today. Because much of the city's housing stock is occupied by senior citizens, it is difficult for young families with school-aged children to buy houses within the city. Even when appropriate housing can be found, some families are unwilling to commit to a 30-year mortgage in the face of the instability which inevitably results as the school district continually adjusts school boundaries and moves programs in order to maintain desegregation as minority enrollment increases an average of 2% per year and 10% every five years.

In view of these complex challenges, the options are relatively few:

1. Continue the Present Course.

As the school system becomes increasingly bimodal, a larger portion of the resources may be required in order to support the compensatory programs needed to remediate the academic and behavioral problems of the "at risk" population. Since Federal and State support for these categorical programs is likely to continue to decrease, their continuation and expansion would necessarily be supported, at least in part, by shifting resources away from the regular

instructional program. As middle class parents perceive this to be the case, more of them would become concerned about the ability of the Minneapolis Public Schools to meet the needs of their children, and more middle class families would move out of the city. The eventual result of selecting this option would be a city made up of only the poor, and a school district serving only the "at-risk."

2. Close the Minneapolis Public Schools.

The Minneapolis Board of Education could vote to abolish Special School District #1 and close the Minneapolis Public Schools. Children living within the City of Minneapolis would, therefore, become the educational responsibility of the neighboring suburban communities and the State of Minnesota. Such an action would most likely result in State intervention and the creation of a county-wide school system, with the opportunities and difficulties of desegregation shared by all schools in the metropolitan area.

3. Permit City-Wide Open Enrollment.

Policies and procedures could be changed so that all students would be allowed to enroll in the the Minneapolis Public School of their parents' choice. Under this option, continued desegregation would become a function of choice. Based on existing data about housing patterns and about program demand, the net effect, over a short period of time, would be that the Minneapolis Public Schools would become resegregated.

4. Restructure.

The entire Minneapolis community could recognize that time, teachers, and students are the only real resources their school system has. Because this is so, they could restructure the school experience so that the teacher-student relationship is enhanced and so that the amount of time available to both achievers and non-achievers is dramatically increased.

We believe that Option 4 is the only viable option as the Minneapolis faces the future. However, restructuring requires the school district to move into "uncharted waters." To do what needs to be done requires the willingness of school district employees--both administrators and teachers--to take risks and to give up some things upon which they have come to depend. It also requires support--both financial and moral--for the path will not always be clear. What is needed is a public-corporate venture designed to discover what public policy can do to make education work for all the children in a diverse, yet stable urban center city.

The Plan

As the Minneapolis school population has become more difficult to teach, the school system has responded by adding "compensatory programs" to provide remedial help and/or socialization. None of these programs has been particularly successful in improving academic achievement, and the growing number of students with academic and social problems is making the average classroom a less than desirable place to educate children who are fortunate enough to come to the school free from those problems.

The result has been loss of public confidence due to a variety of factors including loss of classroom flexibility, higher than desirable class sizes, heavy reliance on one or two modes of instruction that may not be compatible with the learning styles of today's students, isolation of teachers and principals, alienation of parents, and school climates less conducive to learning than they should be.

The research into effective schools has increased understanding about why some schools work better for children than do others, and it has taken away the major arguments used as excuses for why some children--mostly minority and poor--do not learn. But no major systematic structural change in schools has yet occurred. We believe it must.

We believe that by structuring and organizing schools differently, the isolation of teachers can be reduced and the individual attention to children can be increased. The argument is simply this: there are three variables present in a classroom--teachers, students, and time. In the "ideal" classroom setting, most of the students are ready to learn and the teachers' time is allocated to instructional activities. Too often today in an urban school, the teacher devotes a disproportionate amount of time to classroom discipline and socialization. This deprives the more prepared students of time spent on education. In this environment, very little may be demanded of better prepared students except that they behave and create a minimal amount of work.

Of the three variables--students, teachers, and time--only time is adjustable. The current Minneapolis teacher population is very senior and protected by collective bargaining. Little can be done to change the teaching staff. Neither can much be done to change the characteristics of the students in the Minneapolis Public Schools. It is unlikely Minneapolis will be able to attract large numbers of stable middle class students, nor is it likely to be able to export large numbers of its present students to the suburbs. Therefore, all that can be done is to adjust the amount of time the teacher has to devote to each student. This can be done by simply lowering class size. The theory persists that given a low enough student-teacher ratio, the professionalism of teachers can be enhanced and dramatic improvements can be made in academic achievement. The literature suggests that the ratio has to drop below 15 to 1 in order to realize these gains. Minor shifts, from 26 to 24 for example, are unlikely to provide significant relief.

This is a proposal to test that thesis in an attempt to discover a strategy that will improve student achievement, create a more positive public perception of the Minneapolis Public Schools, and stop the alleged "white flight." What is proposed is a demonstration project which would last three years. The project would have the following significant features:

- * Two classrooms at each grade level, K-6, would be created, each with a 14 to 1 student teacher ratio.

- * All supplemental and compensatory programs currently available to these students would be withdrawn.

- * The students, 198 in number, would be selected to reflect the present district population in terms of race, socio-economic status, academic level, and special needs.

- * The teachers would also be selected to reflect the profile of the current teaching staff in the district.

- * The teachers would be responsible for all learner outcomes. No students would be pulled out of the classroom for compensatory services. All problems except for the most extraordinary ones would be handled by the teacher.

- * The principal assigned to this Public Academy would be committed to a joint decision making model in which the teachers could view themselves as leaders and be empowered within the school to make decisions and exercise the authority that is essential for leadership to occur. The primary role of the principal would be to create the conditions in which teachers can lead, to develop leaders, and to lead leaders. One important way teachers would participate in decision making is through determining how the staff flexibility dollars included in this proposal would be used. One possible use might be to purchase paraprofessional aide time to provide prep time and bus coverage. The decision, however, will be left to the professional staff of the Public Academy.

- * Data bearing on student and staff success will be clearly communicated to all parties in a timely manner. There would be an expectation for heavy parent-teacher communication, including after school hours.

- * In short, this school would look as much as possible like the private schools--Breck, Blake, and St. Paul Academy.

- * Improved student performance would be the standard against which the success of this program would be measured.

Evaluation Plan

Academic achievement will be the primary means by which the success of the Public Academy will be judged. Students in grades 2-6 will be given forms of the California Achievement Test (CAT) in the Fall and again in the Spring. The CAT is the same norm referenced test which is given to all Minneapolis students in the Spring and to Chapter 1 students in both the Fall and the Spring. Thus, it will be possible to compare the progress made by students in the Public Academy with the progress of other students, both nationally and locally. Objective 1, below, addresses achievement on this norm referenced test.

In addition, a number of other indicators of success will also be monitored. Objectives 2-6 suggest ways in which the progress of students and the satisfaction of their parents can be

compared with the performance standards the Minneapolis Public Schools established in the second Five Year Plan. The district will be monitoring all schools in these areas and will be striving to accomplish the goals expressed in objectives 2-6 by 1992. The following objectives, then, describe an ambitious program for achieving success in a much shorter time than is anticipated for similar success to be achieved with the present service delivery model.

Objective 1

During the nine months of the 1988-89 school year, 75% of the students in grades 2-6 at the Public Academy will demonstrate at least 14 months of academic growth in both reading and math as measured by scores on the California Achievement Test.

Objective 2

By the end of the year, the telephone logs kept by teachers and the school office will indicate that 90% of the calls from parents will be directed to their child's classroom teacher at his/her home (teachers will be provided with answering machines) rather than to the school principal or the office staff.

Objective 3

By the end of the 1988-89 school year, 90% of the students in grades K-6 at the Public Academy will pass the district's Benchmark Tests on the first try.

Objective 4

By the end of the 1988-89 school year, the parents of every student in the Public Academy will have conferenced at least twice with the student's classroom teacher, and the parents of 95% will be satisfied with the frequency and clarity of progress reports they receive from teachers.

Objective 5

The overall attendance rate for students enrolled in the Public Academy, as measured by district census reports, will be at least 96%.

The Cost

Corporate and foundation sponsors would be asked to pay the difference between what it now costs the Minneapolis Public Schools to educate 198 elementary students and what it would cost to run the Public Academy for three years. Those costs are estimated as follows:

PRESENT STAFFING COSTS

Year 1

8.0 Teachers	\$273,400	211
1.6 Specialists	54,880	
.4 Social Worker	15,185	
1.0 Special Education	34,175	
.5 Speech	17,088	
.7 Intervention	23,923	
.2 Gifted	6,385	
.2 Chapter 1 Comparability	6,385	
20 Hrs/Wk. Health Aide	6,574	
24 Hrs/Wk. Aide	7,889	
Chapter 1 (Tutors, Aides)	28,084	
1.0 Principal	<u>55,200</u>	

Total Expenditures \$529,168

Reimbursement, Spec. Ed.	(\$18,400)
Reimbursement, Soc. Worker	(7,360)
Reimbursement, Speech	(9,200)
Chapter 1 Grant	<u>(28,084)</u>

Total Reimbursement (\$63,044)

Total Expenditures	\$529,168
Total Reimbursement	<u>(63,044)</u>

Actual District Expenditures \$466,124

Year 2

Since the first year costs are all salaries, the second year costs can be estimated by adding 4%.

\$484,769

Year 3

Third year costs are estimated to be 4% above second year costs.

\$504,160

total \$1,455,053

PROPOSED STAFFING COSTS

Year 1

13.0 Teachers	\$444,275
.4 Specialist (Media)	13,750
1.0 Principal	55,200
Staff Flexibility Funds	<u>40,327</u>

Total Expenditures \$553,552

Total Expenditures \$553,552

Total Reimbursements (0)

Actual District Expenditures \$553,552

Year 2

These staffing costs can again be estimated by adding 4%.

\$575,694

Year 3

Third year costs are estimated to be 4% above second year costs.

\$598,723

\$ 1,727,969

OTHER COST CONSIDERATIONS

Space

The present service delivery model used for educating 198 K-6 children in the Minneapolis Public Schools requires 8 classrooms. The proposed model requires 13, or 5 additional classrooms. However, most schools, under the present delivery system, allocate additional classrooms to specialists, Chapter 1, Intervention, and Special Education. Thus, while the proposed model may require some space in addition to that presently used, it is difficult to determine exactly how much. No cost for additional space is included in this proposal. ✓

Staff Development

In order to open a new school or implement a new program, teachers are provided inservice training and curriculum development time. Costs for staff development are included in the request for first year funding as follows:

13 Teachers x \$17/Hr. x 200 Hours = \$44,200

Total Funds Requested**Year 1**

Proposed Staff Expenditure	\$553,552
Present Staff Expenditure	(466,124)
Start-Up Staff Development	44,200
Phone Answering Machines	1,500
Classroom Phone System	<u>12,000</u>
Total Request	\$ 145,128*

Year 2

Proposed Staff Expenditure	\$575,694
Present Staff Expenditure	<u>(484,769)</u>
Total Request	\$ 90,925*

Year 3

Proposed Staff Expenditure	\$598,723
Present Staff Expenditure	<u>(504,160)</u>
Total Request	\$ 94,563*

<u>Three Year Total</u>	\$330,616
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* These requests are based on no reimbursement for compensatory services. If the Minneapolis Public Schools is successful in arguing for an exemption from present rules and pilot status for this proposed service delivery model, the amount of outside funding needed could be reduced by \$63,044 per year to \$82,084 in Year 1, \$27,881 in Year 2 and \$31,519 in Year 3. The district will actively seek pilot status.

It should be noted that while the cost of this pilot program is low, figures have been based upon calculations for one school only. Caution needs to be exercised by those who would conclude that the restructuring suggested in this proposal could be accomplished districtwide at costs/savings exactly proportional to those calculated for this single-site pilot.